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Zion called upon to awake.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

Philadelphia, May 22, 1838,

BEFORE THE

BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS

OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA.

BY SAMUEL MILLER, D.D.

PROFESSOR IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
PRINCETON, N. J.

NEW-YORK:

PRINTED BY SCATCHERD & ADAMS, 33 GOLD STREET.

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At a meeting of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, in the Seventh Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, the 25th of May, 1838, it was

Resolved, That the thanks of the Board be given to the Rev. Dr. Miller, for his sermon preached before them on Tuesday evening the 22d instant, and that a copy be requested for publication.

JOHN M. KREBS, *Recording Sec'y.*

A SERMON, &c.

ISA. lii. 1. *Awake, awake ; put on thy strength, O Zion.*

BY *Zion* here we are evidently to understand the Church of God. Mount Zion, in Jerusalem, having been for ages the seat of Jehovah's worship and honor, it became customary, in all subsequent time, to employ this term to designate the body of the covenanted people of God who once worshipped there. The Church, in the days of Isaiah, had sunk into a state of great lethargy and depression. The servant of God calls upon her to awake at once to the discharge of her duty, and the anticipation of her glory. And, lest she might not be ready to hear this solemn call, it is emphatically repeated : "Awake, awake !" Zion is called to "put on her strength ;" that is, to arouse from her lethargy,—to feel her responsibility ; and to call into earnest and vigorous exercise her graces and her activity in all her appropriate departments of duty.

In the preceding chapter the Church is represented as calling upon her divine Head and Lord to "awake and put on *his* strength ;" that is, to appear in behalf of his own cause, and to sustain and defend it against every foe. And in the passage before us, the Lord, in his turn, by his servant, calls upon the Church to "awake, and put on *her* strength." There is no inconsistency here. Though the Church has no strength of her own, being entirely dependent on her Almighty Sovereign for every power, and every holy and acceptable exercise ; yet she is not, on that account, to be idle. While all her members are, by nature, totally depraved ; and by grace, only partially sanctified ; still they are moral and accountable agents, and ought, of course, to be addressed and treated as such. She is, therefore, called upon to be "awake" and active ; and because there is help from on high, to employ, with diligence, all the means within her reach to attain and enjoy that help.

The "strength" of the Church consists, not in secular power, not in temporal wealth or honor. She never was more feeble, in a spiritual sense, than when she could boast the largest share of these worldly endowments. But her strength consists in moral energy and beauty ; in spiritual health ; in conformity to her Lord's will ; in that fixedness of sanctified purpose and ardor of zeal, in the possession of which she is adapted most effectually and extensively to promote the great purposes for which she was founded. The image, the love, and the faithful service of her Lord, form her glory and her strength. The more she possesses of the grace of the Holy Spirit, the more may she be said to be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

The words of our text, my friends, apply to the Church *now* as really as they did to the Church of old, when the prophet uttered them. The Church *now*, as well as *then*, is laboring under a moral lethargy and indolence, from which she needs to be roused. And if we desire to know the nature of that wakeful and vigorous action to which she ought to be excited, let us inquire a moment what are the great ends for which the Church was originally instituted ? In answer to this question, all agree that she was intended, from the beginning, to be a depository of evangelical truth and order ; and, of course, that she is bound, in all ages, to preserve pure and entire all such doctrines as God has revealed ; and all such religious worship and ordinances as he has appointed in his word ; and, for this purpose, diligently to watch over the faith and practice of all her members. It is not known that any diversity of opinion exists, in regard to these duties, among those who claim the character of evangelical believers.

But in regard to another, and most important branch of the Church's duty, there appears to be less unanimity, especially of late, among her members. I refer to the great duty of imparting the knowledge of the religion which she professes, to those who have it not. There are those who deny that the Church, as such, is bound to make the propagation of the Gospel among the destitute at home and the heathen abroad, an object of her habitual attention ; on the plea that the work of missions may be better done by other means. To this strange doctrine our text, certainly, affords no countenance. It calls on *Zion* to "put on her strength," and to act ; that is, actively and zealously to address herself to the fulfilment of her whole duty, in regard to her own edification and the extension of her Master's kingdom. On this principle I propose to interpret

and consider the passage before us. And in the execution of my purpose, I shall

I. *First*, endeavor to show, *that every Church, as a Church, is bound to employ herself in sending the Gospel to those who are destitute of it*; and,

II. *Secondly*, present some of those considerations which serve to illustrate and enforce the importance of this duty.

I. Let us begin with establishing the general principle, *that the Church, as such, is bound to employ herself habitually and diligently in sending the Gospel to those who are destitute of it. I say, the Church, as such.* By the Church, we are to understand the body of those who profess the true religion, together with their children; the body of those who are united under the authority of Christ, and called out of the world for the promotion of his glory. Now, it is agreed on all hands, that this body, by whatever name she may be called, or under whatever form she may be organized, is bound, as such, to take measures for promoting her own edification and comfort; for supporting a Gospel ministry; for sustaining public worship; for maintaining discipline; for training up her children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;” and for exciting all her members, from time to time, to a deep sense of their delinquency and their duty. I say, under whatever form she may be organized, and whenever her leaders and guides come together, these great objects, which relate to the support of religion within her own bosom, ought to engage her serious attention. She fails of discharging her essential obligations if she neglects them. In this I suppose all agree. But I contend, that in the same capacity in which the visible Church—any visible Church—is bound to attend to those objects which bear on her own spiritual edification, she is equally bound to be employed in “lengthening her cords and strengthening her stakes;” in sending the light of the Gospel to those who are sitting in the region and shadow of death; in supplying the spiritually poor with the bread and the waters of life. In what manner do we expect an individual Christian to “put on spiritual strength?” Not merely by cultivating sanctified affections in the recesses of his own soul, but by going out of himself, and manifesting the strength of his faith, the ardor of his love, and the warmth of his zeal, in vigorous efforts to promote a spirit of piety, in every walk of life, and in all with whom he associates. Something analogous to this is evidently implied when the Church is commanded to “put on her strength.” The injunction always carries with it the idea not merely of keeping alive

religion within herself; but of zealous, energetic action for extending the Redeemer's reign. It implies exerting, with decision and zeal, her appropriate influence, as the body of Christ; enlarging her borders; recommending her Master; and calling as many as possible into his kingdom and glory. The more the Church manifests deep feeling, strong affection, and earnest persevering effort in this cause, the more she may be said to "put on her strength."

Let none say, that this doctrine of the obligation of the Church, as such, to engage in the work of extending the Redeemer's kingdom, is a high church claim, involving the arrogant assumption, that the body which makes it, is alone the Church of Christ. There are those who urge this objection. But it is impossible to conceive of a charge more groundless or unreasonable. The Presbyterian Church claims to be only one of the branches of the great visible Church Catholic, throughout the world, of which all evangelical denominations form the other branches; and our doctrine is, that *our branch* of this body, as well as all the other branches, is bound, not only to support the religion of Christ at home, but to send it abroad to the utmost of her power to those who are "perishing for lack of knowledge." We are so far from restricting this duty to our beloved Church, that we contend earnestly for the same obligation as resting upon every religious body which bears the name, or claims the character, of a church of Jesus Christ.

To the body of his people the Saviour said, "Ye are the light of the world; a city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost its savour, (that is, if it have lost the power of exerting a preserving influence on that which comes in contact with it) wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men." If these figures mean any thing, they imply that the Church, when she fails of diffusing her light abroad for the benefit of those beyond her pale, who sit in darkness; and when she does not cause her preserving and purifying influence to be felt through all that corrupt and putrifying mass to which she can obtain access, criminally fails of accomplishing the great purpose for which she was called and instituted. She was filled with the light

and the salt of grace for the purpose of extending a benefit by means of them to a polluted world.

That such *was* considered as the duty of the Church, from the very commencement of the New Testament dispensation, is undeniable. The last command of the ascending Saviour, to her leaders and guides was, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." And again, in the same solemn circumstances,—“Jesus came and spake unto them, (the apostles,) saying: ‘All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.’” This injunction was not confined to the apostles. It is manifestly binding as long as there shall be a family or an individual of Adam’s race without the Gospel. For it was in immediate connection with this command that the Saviour added,—“Lo, I am with you always, *even unto the end of the world* ;” plainly implying, that the obligation to perform the duty enjoined, was as broad and as lasting as the promise of support under its performance. The same great command is either directly or virtually repeated from the date of the Master’s ascension to the end of the New Testament history. And, accordingly, THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH WAS ALWAYS AND EMINENTLY A MISSIONARY CHURCH. She was constantly employed in plans and labors for spreading the Gospel. In conformity with the Saviour’s injunction, she immediately addressed herself to the great duty of *preaching repentance and remission of sins unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*. She raised funds, and sent out missionaries in every direction. In all her assemblies for worship, *the conversion of the world* was evidently the great prominent object of counsel and prayer. And her sincerity in these prayers was evinced by unceasing and vigorous efforts for carrying the object prayed for into effect. Accordingly we find the apostles, and their contemporary coadjutors in the ministry, preaching the Gospel, and establishing churches, not only in *Palestine*, but in *Syria*, in *Asia Minor*, in *Greece* ; as far west as the city of *Rome*, and as far east as *Babylon*. Nay, they went on, exploring one moral wilderness after another, and breaking up field after field with the Gospel plough, until they had spread the knowledge of the religion of Christ over the greater part of the Roman empire, which might then be said to comprise the known world.

Such was the spirit and course of the primitive Church. And can we doubt that it was a right spirit, and that it ought

to be the spirit of the Church in all ages? For what was the Church originally founded, but for this, as well as for other purposes; or rather mainly for this purpose,—that she might be, as it were, a great light-house to the nations; that she might, according to the language of the inspired apostle, “hold forth the word of life” to the benighted and the perishing? Nay, can we conceive of an organized body of Christians, prizing the Gospel in any measure as they ought; considering it as the only hope of ruined man; as “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth,” without feeling impelled to send it as far as possible, from the rising to the setting sun? Were the apostle Paul now to rise from the dead, and re-visit our assemblies in person, with what amazement would he hear it alleged, that it is no part of the church’s duty to engage in the missionary enterprise; but that this hallowed work ought to be resigned to other hands! “No part of the Church’s duty,” the holy man would reply, “to send the Gospel abroad beyond her own bounds! If this be not her appropriate work, nothing is. SHE IS IN HER OWN NATURE ESSENTIALLY A MISSIONARY SOCIETY, as really and essentially as she is a society for worship or for discipline.”

The great question, my friends, which we have to settle, is not what others *may* do, if they think proper; but what the church is *bound* to do. We do not deny that any persons, who choose, may associate, and raise funds, and employ living teachers to carry and explain the Bible to those who are destitute of the Gospel. No one doubts the right of any persons who think proper to employ their time and their funds in such an enterprise. It cannot, for a moment, be questioned, that the most heterogeneous mass of Pelagians, Socinians, Deists, and even Atheists, responsible to no worldly authority, and agreeing in nothing among themselves, but the single object of their association, *may*, if they choose, unite for the prosecution of that object. But would it be wise in the Church to surrender the work of missions into such hands? Would the great cause of spreading the Gospel be safe an hour under such management? Nay, is it not incorrect in principle, that ecclesiastical men, or ecclesiastical matters, should be authoritatively disposed of by any other than ecclesiastical bodies? Especially, according to the constitution of the Presbyterian Church, can any man be licensed to preach the Gospel, or ordained to the work of the ministry, or regularly sent to any field of labor, domestic or foreign, without the authority of the ecclesiastical judicatory to which he is subject? While it is plain, then, that some branches of the

missionary enterprise are open to all who choose to pursue them ; it is equally plain that other branches of that enterprise, and those the most vital and important, are absolutely restricted to the judicatories of the Church. Others *may*, to a certain extent, engage in this work ; but the Church *must* engage in it as one of her primary objects. It is her appropriate work. She is disobedient to her master's command, and recreant to her most sacred and tender obligations, when she neglects it. For this she was founded. For this her scriptural organization, in church Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assembly, is more perfectly and happily adapted than that of any other body on earth. And the performance of this work, while it is her duty, is, at the same time, her life and her glory.

II. Let us next *attend to some of those considerations which serve to illustrate and enforce the importance of this duty ;* and,

1. Among these considerations, *the command of our Master in heaven holds the first and highest place.* Of this we have spoken already ; but it cannot be too frequently remembered, or too seriously inculcated. He who founded the Church, calling its members out from the world, and forming them into a community devoted to his own glory, has expressly commanded them not only to preserve in their purity all the truth and ordinances delivered unto them, but also to send out his light and his truth ; to extend his empire ; and to make known the wonders of his love and mercy to all nations. We have heard this command addressed to the ministers of his church, and in them to all her members. How express its import ! how universal its application ! how solemn its sanction ! Now, as this command was early given to the Church, and has never been repealed, so it evidently binds the whole Church. Not only her *leaders* and *guides*, as such, to whom it was originally given, but also all her members. There is not a brother or sister of the Church within these walls but is laid under obligation by this command. Nor is it possible for any one to be divested of this obligation. We are all solemnly and indissolubly bound to do all in our power for sending the Gospel to every creature that has it not. Nay, further ; it is common to say, that the duty in question is incumbent on every member of the Church, however obscure his situation or narrow his circumstances. This is true ; but the duty is not confined to these. As every individual, however situated, to whom the Gospel comes, is bound to believe and obey it, and to unite himself with the visible Church ; so, in like manner, every individual who hears

the Gospel, whether he come under its power himself or not, is under obligations to do all that he can for sending it to every human being within his reach. Such are the extent and force of the Master's command. It binds every intelligent creature, who knows the Gospel. He who possesses this knowledge, and does not extend it, is guilty before God. Much more may we consider the Church, when *she* neglects to spread this saving knowledge, as guilty; because she not only has this treasure committed to her for safe keeping and for diffusion, but must be supposed to know something by experience of its infinite value; and to be aware that the duty of imparting it to all nations is one of the great purposes for which she received her institution.

2. *The Church, as such, and every individual member of it, are bound to send the Gospel to all who are destitute of it, on the principle of common benevolence.*

Both the nature and the urgency of the missionary cause are founded on the fact, that the whole family of mankind is, by nature, in a state of moral and physical ruin; sunk in ignorance; degraded by sin; and suffering under all those miseries for which the Gospel alone can furnish a remedy. Common humanity, then, to say nothing of higher considerations, ought to impel us to do all in our power to send them this greatest, best gift of God to fallen, miserable man.

The darkness and degradation of the heathen, my friends, are frequently dwelt upon, and made the topic of strong argument in enforcing the claims of missions. But, after all, no representation has ever been made equal to the awfulness of the reality. Yes, I am verily persuaded, that, after the most heart-affecting description of their deplorable moral and physical condition that you ever heard, were it possible for you to go and contemplate the reality with your own eyes; could you take your station, for a while, amidst all their pollution and wretchedness; you would say, without hesitation, that "the half had never been told you." Were you to be witnesses of their gross ignorance of the plainest principles of what we are accustomed to call natural religion; their unblushing disregard of truth and integrity in all their intercourse; their habitual, unfeeling cruelty to one another, as well as to strangers; their systematic infanticide, exhibiting parents as monsters instead of human beings; their disregard of the marriage tie, that precious ordinance of God, to which society is more indebted for its purity, peace and happiness, than tongue can tell; their utter destitution of all those personal, social, and domestic habits and comforts, which depend for their existence

on civilization and Christianity ; their entire want of consolation under the sorrows of life, and of hope in death ; were you to be personal witnesses of these things, what, think you, would be the impression on your minds ? Could the benevolent heart endure it ! Could you “ shut up your bowels of compassion ” toward them ?

Lay all these melancholy facts together, and then say, whether the heathen are not entitled to your tender commiseration ? Now, we are in possession of an effectual remedy for all these wants and woes ; and are able, under God, to send it to them. How, then, can we answer it at the bar of conscience or of God, if we neglect or delay to send it ? If we were informed of millions, in a distant land, who were suffering and dying amidst the horrors of famine, and should neglect, when it was in our power, to send them food, we should regard ourselves, and be regarded by others, as monsters of inhumanity. But here is an infinitely stronger case. Unnumbered millions of our fellow-men, not worse by nature than ourselves, are known to be living in misery, dying in despair, and daily passing, as we have every reason to fear, into hopeless and endless misery ; when we have it in our power to send them that which, by the divine blessing, may make them happy in this world, and happy forever. And shall we neglect to send it ? O my friends, put your souls in their souls’ stead, and then say whether you are “ doing to them, as you, in like circumstances, would desire them to do to you ? ”

3. *The degree of “ strength ” which the professing people of God put forth in this great cause, may be regarded, at once, as a test and a measure of their personal piety.*

There seems to be, my friends, I know not how, a sentiment prevailing, to a great extent, even among professing Christians, that, although missionary zeal is a good thing ; commendable in itself, and undoubtedly worthy of approbation where it exists ; yet that this spirit does not essentially belong to the Christian character. That it is left very much to our own pleasure or taste, whether this shall be a favorite object with us or not. And that we may be entirely destitute of it ; or, at any rate, possess a very small share of it, without any impeachment of our Christian spirit. In opposition to this opinion, I am constrained to concur in sentiment with the excellent and justly celebrated Dr. Doddridge, who remarks, with emphasis, that “ THE SPIRIT OF THE GOSPEL IS, UNIVERSALLY AND ESSENTIALLY, A SPIRIT OF MISSIONS ; AND THAT WE MUST GRADUATE OUR CHRISTIAN CHARACTER BY THE DEGREE IN WHICH WE POSSESS THIS SPIRIT.” The sentiment is un-

doubtedly just. What is the Christian spirit ? It is the spirit of Christ ; for "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." It is the spirit of him who came down from heaven "to seek and to save that which was lost." It is the spirit which, in conformity with the angel's anthem, seeks to bring "glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will to men." And what is *this*, but precisely *the spirit of missions* ? What is *this*, but the very spirit which prompts men, from a regard to the glory of God, and the temporal and eternal welfare of their fellow-men, to exert themselves to send the Gospel to every creature ; and to desire that this Gospel, which is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," may pervade the world ?

Let no one, then, imagine that the spirit of missions is something which we are not all bound to possess ; something which we may be entirely destitute of without forfeiting our Christian character. We might just as well contend, that he who has no love to the Saviour ; no regard for his kingdom and glory ; no love for his fellow-creatures ; no desire to promote the best interests of mankind ; may yet be a Christian. I will not say, my friends, how much allowance, in relation to this point, ought to be made, in particular cases, for ignorance, and for having been placed in circumstances peculiarly unfavorable to proper impressions on this subject. I judge the heart of no one. I undertake not to weigh the spirit, or to estimate the relative guilt of any individual. But I will venture to say, that, in all cases whatsoever, the reign of the spirit of missions in any heart, does actually graduate the measure of piety in that heart : and that, where there is correct information on the subject, so far as real religion exists, just in the same proportion will a desire for the salvation of others, and, of course, for the spread of the Gospel, exist, and, in some good degree, manifest itself in corresponding breathings and exertions. So that, if any one who professes to be a Christian, when called upon for zeal, and prayer, and exertion, according to his ability, in behalf of missions, is ready to say, "I pray thee, have me excused ;" I see not how charity herself can believe that that man has any portion of the spirit of Christ. Yes, my friends, were I able to go from seat to seat in this house, and to decide who has a desire for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom and the salvation of souls, and who has not ; I should, by that decision, draw the dividing line between the living and the dead ; between the friends and the enemies of the blessed Saviour.

The truth is, "strength" in Christian grace is inseparably

connected, where there is an opportunity of exercising it, with "strength" in Christian action. They are the same in principle. The great Author of our holy religion has joined them indissolubly together. Let no one think of putting them asunder. No man can "put on strength" for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, without being previously "strengthened with might by the spirit in the inner man;" and the moment any one is thus strengthened, he will be disposed to "put on strength" for the spread of the glorious Gospel. It is not then left optional with any one whether he will cherish the spirit of missions or not, any more than it is left optional whether he will believe in Christ or not. No man, indeed, can be *compelled* to believe in Christ. It must be a voluntary act, if he believe at all. But if he believe not, he is no Christian. The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. And if he continue to be destitute of a living faith in the adorable Redeemer, he must "die in his sins." Precisely so is it in reference to the subject before us. He who cherishes a desire for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, and for the salvation of his fellow-men, must, of course, do it voluntarily, if acceptably, or at all. But to suppose that, therefore, he is at liberty to neglect it, is the greatest of all absurdities. He might just as well imagine that he is at liberty to neglect prayer, if he please; to neglect the study of the Bible, if he please; to neglect the ordinances of the sanctuary, if he please; or to neglect the love of God, if he please. He may, indeed, neglect them all, if he please; but it will be at the awful expense of showing that he is "an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger to the covenant of promise."

Does any one of my hearers, then, desire to know whether he is a Christian; whether Christ has been received by him for the salvation of his own soul; whether he is indeed precious to him as a Saviour from sin. Let him ask himself, whether he is conscious of a serious concern for the souls of others? Whether he has any sincere desire for the salvation of his fellow-men; or has done, or intends to do, any thing to promote it? We may lay down this as an infallible test. No man ever yet received for himself "the record which God has given of his Son," without desiring, if it were possible, to make that record known to every human being.

4. *The vital interests of the Church herself demand that she should "put on strength" in sending the Gospel to those who have it not.*

As a revival of religion in the bosom of a Church, is indis-

pensable to the prevalence and reign of a missionary spirit ; so it may be said, with equal confidence, that the excitement and prevalence of a missionary spirit in the church, is no less indispensable, for keeping alive and extending, genuine revivals of religion in all her borders. As it is in the material, so also in the moral world. As no man can be expected to engage with vigor and success in the active labors of his vocation, while disease is undermining all the powers of life ; so he who ceases to be active, will be likely soon to become the victim of enfeebling and wasting disease.

There is no principle more firmly established, either by theory or practice, than this,—that if we desire to impart a healthful vigor to any faculty or body, we must call it to the exercise of its appropriate powers. The arm of flesh is strengthened by much muscular action ; the intellectual faculties by constant employment and cultivation ; and all the moral powers by vigilant, persevering exercise. Every thing becomes enfeebled by indolence ; and nothing more so than the religious spirit. Hence it is just as important to the Church herself, as it is to the heathen, that she be diligently employed in contriving and executing plans for sending the glorious Gospel to those who are destitute of it ; and thus extending the empire and the glory of her Lord and Master. This is an aspect, my friends, under which, I fear, the great cause of missions is not so generally or seriously contemplated as it ought to be. And yet it appears to me one of the most important and deeply interesting under which the subject can be viewed. That is, considering missionary zeal and efforts AS MEANS OF GRACE, ADAPTED TO REACT ON THE CHURCH HERSELF WHILE SHE EXERCISES THEM, AND RICHLY TO PROMOTE ALL HER BEST INTERESTS. The very act of performing a Christian duty aright, always reflects a benefit on the performer. “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Or rather, in the department of sanctified benevolence of which we speak, we never give, without, by the very act, receiving, by a reflux influence, more than we give. It is thus that every sincere effort, either by churches or by individuals, to spread the knowledge of Christ, and to promote the salvation of souls, always reacts on themselves as one of the most happy and efficacious means of grace. It draws down the divine blessing. It stirs and excites spiritual life. It rouses and quickens the Christian graces. It calls into lively exercise those very principles, feelings and affections in which the life of religion consists ; and, of course, promotes the spiritual prosperity of those who make the effort in question, as well as of those to whom it is directed.

Accordingly, as long as the early Church continued to be a **MISSIONARY CHURCH**, she prospered. The pulse of her spiritual life beat strong; her borders were rapidly extended; and her conquests over the powers of darkness were gloriously multiplied. But whenever, and just as far as her missionary spirit declined, she lost her purity and her life. In losing her zeal for the spread of the Gospel, like Sampson of old, when shorn of his locks,—she lost her strength. Her enemies came upon her, and made her an easy prey. Gross doctrinal error, degrading superstition, intestine feuds, and moral profligacy began to grow apace; until she exhibited a miserable carcase, bloated by disease, and spreading a deadly pestilence all around her.

If I were called upon, then, to give counsel to a Church struggling with difficulties within and without, and mourning over a low state of religion in all her assemblies; if I were requested to point out the best means of rousing her from a state of torpor; and of promoting her purity, her enlargement, and her spiritual strength; I would say to her—"If you wish to rise, and grow and prosper, engage in good earnest in spreading the Gospel of Christ. "Awake, and put on strength" in this noble enterprise; and all will be well. Address yourselves to it by zealous counsel, by prayer, and by pecuniary offerings, according to your ability. Endeavor to engage in this hallowed work every member and every hearer, from childhood to the hoary head. Try the experiment:—and, amidst your feebleness, it will strengthen you. Amidst your languor and coldness, it will be the means of rousing you to feeling, and zeal, and strength, and sacred enterprise. Every prayer you offer; every pecuniary gift you bestow in faith; every benevolent effort you make for the salvation of the heathen, will return with blessing into your own bosom. In watering others, you shall be watered yourselves. In laboring to bring others to the Saviour, you will draw nearer to Him yourselves; and gain a more endearing resemblance to him day by day.

Let no church, then, nor any of her members, say, that they *cannot afford* to do much in the work of missions to the heathen. Let them not say that they are called upon for so much expenditure of money and of effort *at home*, that they have neither time nor contributions to spare for the *foreign field*. Never was there a more miserable mistake. "There is," says the inspired wise man, "there is that withholdeth, but it tendeth to poverty." There is no case in which this proverb is more invariably or instructively exemplified than in the neglect of the missionary cause. Not able to *afford* time or money for this cause! Infatuated plea! Those who profess to love the Saviour,

and to desire greater conformity to his will, ought rather to say—"We *cannot afford to live without* unceasing zeal and prayers, and efforts in the missionary cause. We shall rather impoverish than enrich ourselves, in the most important sense, by withholding our liberality toward this great cause." Settle it in your minds, my friends, that one of the best means of promoting religion *at home*, is to engage with earnestness and vigor in sending it *abroad*:—that if you wish "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" to descend on ourselves, your children, and your neighbors, you cannot adopt a more direct method of drawing down the blessing, than to cherish feelings of pity for the poor heathen, who know nothing of your privileges, and to do all in your power to send them the bread and the waters of life.

And now, my friends, let us, more particularly, apply this subject to ourselves. We are assembled, as the representatives of our beloved Church, to recognize for ourselves, and to endeavor to impress on the minds of others, the duty and importance of engaging with zeal, as a Church, in the great cause of Foreign Missions. It is well known to those whom I now address, that a large number of the friends of truth and order in our body, have been earnestly desiring, for a number of years past, to engage in this work, in an ecclesiastical capacity. After many a painful and unsuccessful struggle to attain the privilege, God has been pleased, at length, to grant us the desire of our hearts. Need I say, Christian brethren, that the history of the conflict by which we have gained the position which we now occupy, is deeply interesting, and greatly increases our responsibility. Have we been contending for a mere nominal honor; or for a precious, practical privilege? Surely every consideration of worldly consistency, as well as of sanctified principle, calls upon us to arise in all the strength that God may give us, and to pursue in good earnest the object which we profess to love, and which we have solicited the power of pursuing. O, let us not contradict or disgrace our oft-repeated profession. Let us not manifest by our indolence, now that the point is attained, that our object was, not to perform the work, but to gain the victory. Let us rather testify, by our zeal, diligence and energy in this cause, that the love of Christ does indeed constrain us; that the love of souls does indeed fill our hearts; and that we regard it as our highest privilege to be engaged in the great work of converting the world to God.

That we have been, as a Church, greatly and deplorably remiss in regard to this duty, we must all acknowledge. And how far a righteous God may have permitted, as a judgment

for this criminal remissness, so much coldness, and leanness, and error, and strife, to enter and distress our Zion, I pretend not to decide. I can only say, that the very same effects followed the same neglect of missionary efforts, on the part of the Church, sixteen hundred years ago; and that similar results may, in all similar circumstances, be expected. And although we have begun to arouse ourselves, and to act in this great field of benevolence, we are yet but half awake. I repeat it, my friends, we are yet but half awake, either to the value of the Gospel, or to the misery of those who are destitute of it. What have we done, or what are we doing, compared with what the magnitude of the cause, or the authority of the Master requires at our hands? What are the *twenty* or *thirty* missionaries which we now sustain in the foreign field, to the *five hundred*, or rather double that number, which a Church so large and so wealthy as ours ought to be at this hour sustaining? O that another *Isaiah* might be raised up;—another *Isaiah*, in spirit and in eloquence, to go forth through the length and breadth of the land, proclaiming again in the language of our text, “Awake! awake! O Zion! put on thy strength.” What object in the universe, let me ask, can more emphatically, or more worthily call on us to put on all our strength, than that of extending the Redeemer’s empire, and promoting the everlasting blessedness of millions of immortal spirits; and, for this purpose, sending them that glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth?” Surely here is an object worthy of every effort, and of every sacrifice that can be made by an intelligent and accountable creature.

Let the efforts and sacrifices which the children of this world are ever ready to make for their favorite objects, put our indifference in the greatest of all causes to shame. The sons of avarice and of ambition are ever ready to encounter the dangers of pestilential climates, or the terrors of the battle-field, for the sake of mammon or of fame. The children of pleasure compass sea and land, and submit to the most persevering toil and expense for attaining their beloved gratifications. Oh, if those who call themselves by the name of Christ, in our beloved Zion alone, were only willing to incur half the expenditure in sending the Gospel to the heathen, that the votaries of appetite and of luxury constantly and cheerfully incur in the purchase of those INTOXICATING POISONS, which tend to destroy soul and body forever; we might multiply at once fifty-fold—nay, an hundred-fold our missionaries—and all our other means for the salvation of benighted millions.

But there is another consideration in the way of example still more tender and affecting. Reflect, for a moment, my friends, on the character of the primitive Christians, with respect to the subject before us; and compare their spirit and conduct with our own. Read the history of their labors and sufferings. Think how they braved dangers, and denied themselves, and made sacrifices for spreading the Gospel, at which the frigidness of modern zeal stands abashed and astonished. Yes, amidst all the poverty and privations under which they labored, they brought forth offerings for sending the knowledge of salvation to others, truly wonderful in their amount. Nay, they not only gave their substance—sometimes to the last farthing—to this object; but they counted not their lives too dear to be made an offering for the promotion of the Saviour's kingdom and glory. Think, my Christian friends, of this affecting record, and then say, whether those who talk of giving only what is perfectly *convenient* for the cause of Christian benevolence; nay, who seem to grudge the sacrifice of a piece of ornamental and unnecessary dress, for this hallowed cause, can be considered as belonging to the same body, and as animated with the same spirit, with those primitive believers?

Has it come to this, my beloved friends, that Christian men and women can satisfy their consciences with acting and giving for Christ's kingdom on a scale so small as not to interfere with a single luxury; or to call for a single act of real self-denial and sacrifice? Did the Saviour do no more than this for us? Did the Apostles and other primitive ministers of the Gospel, do no more than *THIS* for the benighted millions of their day? Yes, *they* sacrificed *THEIR ALL* for the conversion of the world. O! if they had neither done nor given more than was *convenient*, for this great object, where had we now been? What had been the situation of our miserable, ruined race? Shame on the indolence and the parsimony which can calculate so ignobly for the greatest of all causes, and the best of all Masters!

My dear Christian friends, there must be more moral strength in the Church before she can be prepared to make her appropriate impression on the world. She must be seen to be more in earnest in seeking the extension and glory of her Master's kingdom. She must have more of the spirit of love, of zeal, of self-denial, and self-sacrifice. She must begin to make the enlargement of the Redeemer's empire her *main object*, before the "latter day glory" can dawn on our troubled world. And if she desires to "put on this strength," she must seek it from on high. We have no strength of our own. All

“our sufficiency is of God.” When we are most sensible of our own weakness, and most importunate in begging for that strength which it is the prerogative of the Holy Spirit of God to impart, then, and not till then, are we in a fair way to obtain the blessing desired. This the Apostle, no doubt, meant, when he said, “when I am weak, then am I strong.” That is, when I most cordially renounce all reliance on my own strength and wisdom, I am most strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Christian brethren, let us, then, arouse from our lethargy, and put forth all our strength, as one man in this great enterprise of benevolence; or rather cry mightily to God that “his strength may be made perfect in our weakness.” Three-fourths of the population of our globe are without the Gospel. Millions on millions of their number are ready and willing to receive it; nay, large numbers are stretching forth their hands to us to send it to them. The door is wide open to almost every nation under heaven, to enter with “the glad tidings of great joy to all people.” Shall we turn a deaf ear to the cry of their necessities and their desolation? Shall we consent to sit down, and enjoy our Bibles, or Sabbaths, our Sacramental Tables, and all our inestimable privileges *alone*, while they are dying without them? Tell me not of your love to the Saviour, while you are so indifferent to the extension of his glory. Tell me not of your enjoyment in religion, while you have no practical concern for the eternal welfare of benighted and starving millions. Tell me not of your benevolence in feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked around you, when you can sit, with your arms folded, while unnumbered multitudes of immortal spirits within your reach, are sinking under a famine of the word of life. Beloved friends! by the command of our common Master, I conjure you. By the example of the Apostles and Martyrs, I conjure you. By all that is touching and tender in the value of the immortal soul, I conjure you. By the prayers, and tears, and self-denial and labors of our venerated Fathers, in this land, in by-gone years, I conjure you. By the honor of our beloved Zion, and of that Orthodoxy for which we contend, I conjure you. Let the time past suffice to have slumbered over this all-precious and blessed cause. Let the long and humiliating delinquency of us who are old and grey-headed, at once admonish and animate our younger brethren to set a more worthy example of zeal and activity in this cause, than we have done. Delinquent as we who are aged have been, let us have the pleasure of seeing those who are now coming forward to the work of the Lord, take hold of the enterprise before us with a

vigorous grasp, and bear it forward with their whole souls. Then may we hope, before we go hence, to see such opening prospects of our Master's triumph, as will warrant us in exclaiming—"Lord, now let thy servants depart in peace, for our eyes have seen thy salvation!" Delay not a moment longer! "Awake! awake! put on strength" in this holy enterprize. Think of nothing but pressing onward. Think of nothing but augmenting, greatly augmenting effort, until every family, and every individual of our race shall be furnished with the knowledge of "redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace."

In this labor of love, we have no desire to damp the zeal, or to interfere with the labors of any other body. There is room for every laborer that can repair to this immense field. The more numerous the truly evangelical missionaries sent forth to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation to the heathen, the better. We rejoice in them all, and are ready to bid them all God speed. But while we bless the Lord for the labors of all true friends of Christ, whatever names they bear; we wish for the privilege of standing in *our* lot, and performing *our part* of this hallowed and delightful work. For the sake of our Master's honor we wish it. For the sake of the poor heathen we wish it. For the sake of our own spiritual edification we wish it. It has pleased the great head of the Church to give us an ecclesiastical organization pre-eminently adapted to excite and to concentrate our zeal and efforts in this great field of evangelical benevolence. When every judicatory of our beloved Zion, from the Church Session to the General Assembly, shall feel itself to be a *pledged and devoted missionary board*, and shall begin to cherish the zeal, and to act the part proper to such a board; then, and not till then, the question so often anxiously asked, whether we can carry on with spirit the missionary enterprize, without *special agents*, to visit and rouse our congregations? shall be happily and triumphantly answered in the affirmative. Again, then, I say, to every member, and every well-wisher of our Zion, Awake! awake! Pray and labor without ceasing, until there shall be a general and united movement of our whole Church, to carry the glorious Gospel to every kindred, and people, and nation, and tongue; and until the knowledge and glory of the Lord shall "cover the earth as the waters fill the sea." Amen, and amen!

